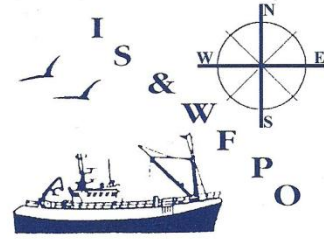


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PRESS RELEASE

***IS&WFPO highlight an Industry in despair due to pressure of Penalty Points
and Landing Obligation at meeting with Minister Coveney***

Representatives of the Board of Directors of the **Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation (IS&WFPO)** today met with Minister Coveney to convey the desperation felt by many in the Industry due to the pressure placed on them by quota restrictions, penalty points and the looming implementation of the whitefish discards ban.

“There were a number of items on the Agenda for today's meeting but they all circled back to the two key issues of concern facing the Fishing Industry this year, the penalty points system and the implementation of the landing obligation for the whitefish sector” explained **Eibhlin O’Sullivan**, CEO of the IS&WFPO.

“As we have repeatedly stressed over the years, Ireland is at a disadvantage in comparison to many of European counterparts due to the limited amount of quota allocated to it. This means, for example, that the implementation of the discard band for whitefish stocks such as Cod, Haddock and Whiting which is due to begin implementation on a phased basis from the 1st of January next year, will have a far more significant impact on Irish fishermen due to the limited quota available to them. While there has been a lot of talk about quota uplift i.e. that additional quota will be allocated in recognition of the reduction in discards, as this will be allocated according to established relative stability keys (i.e. will be shared out by the EU to the various Member States under agreed percentages) Ireland will only receive a small amount of this uplift, a fact which Minister Coveney acknowledged at today's meeting while at the same time maintaining the importance of the quota uplift”.

*“A similar situation exists in relation to penalty points which were introduced in 2014. The SFPA (the Enforcement Agency responsible for fisheries control and enforcement) have themselves acknowledged that due to quota systems utilised by other Member States it is extremely difficult to take **any enforcement action** against non-Irish vessels fishing in Irish*

waters. Again, this makes it far more likely that an Irish fishing vessel will be allocated penalty points than its European counterparts” continued Ms. O’Sullivan. “We have on a number of occasions highlighted our serious concerns in the way in which the penalty points system has been implemented in Ireland and we, once again, put it to Minister Coveney that the current system is unconstitutional and should be changed.”

“A common thread running through all the agenda items was the pressure felt by the Irish Whitefish sector due to the limited quotas available to them which is particularly evident at present for those vessels who concentrate on Haddock and Whiting in the Celtic Sea. Minister Coveney while acknowledging that there had been quota reductions for these vessels this year reiterated his view that, provided it is supported by scientific advice, these reductions should be reversed next year, the IS&WFPO once again utilised this as a further example of the importance of adequate and accurate scientific advice and ensuring funding for same is available.”

The meeting concluded with the IS&WFPO providing the Minister with a copy of its Policy Statement for the Fishing Industry for 2015-2020.

ENDS

Dated this 30th day of March, 2015.

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